

That is what we face now. A concerted effort on the part of the Republican leadership in the other body to not let these two bills come to the floor and be passed. It is a shame.

The American people, those who are on the minimum wage need a hike. They have not had one for a long time. Many people would benefit from the Kennedy-Kassebaum health insurance reform because it would provide portability, the ability to take your health insurance with you when you lose a job or when you transfer jobs.

It would also allow for people to buy health insurance who now cannot because they have a preexisting medical condition.

Now, it is time for this legislation to move and be passed and be sent to the President. We only have a short amount of time here. I do not know, there is maybe 25, 30, possibly fewer legislative days. If the Republican leadership continues to put a hold on these bills—

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must interrupt to repeat her earlier admonition concerning reflections on the Senate.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I just wanted to, if I could, in the time that remains to me, point out that the minimum wage right now is \$4.25 an hour, which adds up to about \$8,800 a year. It is a disgrace that someone in America can work a 40-hour week for 52 weeks a year and only earn \$8,800. How can we as a country that was founded on principles that we all have the same opportunity to improve our quality of life to pull ourselves up from bootstraps only to deny those dreams to our working poor.

Every day that the Republican majority delays the vote to increase the minimum wage, another American dream is essentially shattered. The Republican leadership has talked about family values for many years, but I think its mere rhetoric when it comes to minimum wage. Minimum wage workers are forced to leave their families far beyond the 8-hour day just to provide a balanced meal for their children.

If a minimum wage earner worked a 16-hour day, they would only earn \$68 for that day. Under the Democratic proposal, which again is really a bipartisan proposal, they would take home over \$82 a day for their efforts, an extra \$14. That means that maybe they can go out and buy a meal for their children or a healthier meal.

Right now many who live on the minimum wage do not have health insurance. They do not have the ability, basically, to provide for their family. My point is that if we increase the minimum wage, we make it possible for a lot of these people to not be so dependent upon government subsidies.

Again, there is going to be a bill coming to the floor next week on welfare

reform. I think most of us on a bipartisan basis would like to see some kind of welfare reform. How can you have welfare reform if you do not have an increase in the minimum wage? You have to provide an incentive for people to get off of welfare, for people to not need government assistance.

If they do not make a fair-share wage that will not be possible. I want to point out that in my own State, on a State level we passed a minimum wage increase a few years ago somewhat similar to the one proposed on the Federal level. The result was that more jobs were created.

There was a study done by two Princeton University economists recently for New Jersey and basically what it pointed out was the minimum wage workers take that extra money and they go out and buy things, whether it is food or whatever it is that they need as basic necessities of life. That creates more jobs. It actually helps the economy. I know some have suggested that raising the minimum wage is going to lose jobs, but that is not the case. It actually increases economic activity. I urge that this bill move in both Houses and go to the President.

TRAGEDY IN CHECHNYA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. WOLF] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, yesterday's headline was "Russia pounds Chechens as election truce unravels." Today's headline tells us the "Chechen war escalates once more." Report after report details a growing number of casualties. Many people, both military and civilian, are being killed each day. No one seems to know exactly how many but the total is growing. So is the number of refugees trying to stay one step ahead of the fighting and destruction; moving like the tide, first here, then there. Fleeing, leaving the fighting and danger behind only to reencounter it up ahead.

The Russian military has taken off the gloves now that Boris Yeltsin has been safely reelected. With tough talking ex-General Alexander Lebed in his corner, President Yeltsin has unleashed an awesome array of brutal military might on tiny independent-minded Chechnya. The apparent goal is to crush the life out of any desire for independence, no matter what the price. The most recent down payment was the death of Russian Maj. Gen. Nikolai Skripnik and a number of other soldiers on one side and guerrilla fighters and innocent civilians on the other. The numbers grown each day now. And no one seems to have the will to stop this carnage.

Certainly no one in our White House. This administration continues to sit on its hands regarding Chechnya. It has not spoken out to condemn the brutality and the havoc. The Clinton policy on Chechnya has been to remain silent. Deathly silent. Webster's defines genocide as "the deliberate, systematic destruction of a group." Chechnya is a textbook example of genocide and we say nothing.

This administration—this President—has walked away from human rights at every turn.

China, for example, where President Clinton delinked human rights from MFN trading status. After resounding denouncements of President Bush's policy to elevate trade matters above concerns for human rights Bill Clinton advanced the identical notion to the point where there are no longer even discussions on human rights with the Chinese. National Security Adviser Anthony Lake just returned from a round of high level talks with China. The topic of human rights was conspicuous by its absence from the agenda.

In Russia itself, anti-Semitism is cropping up more and more. Anti-Jewish rhetoric, if not commonplace, is at least being voiced by some mainstream officials. Presidents Carter, Reagan, and Bush condemned anti-Semitism and antihuman rights policies to every turn. Today's White House remains silent—to offend no one and thereby offend us all.

I visited Chechnya last year, met the people, Russian and Chechen, soldier and civilian, and saw first hand the results of this horror. I saw the burned out school of Shamanski. Heard about the grotesque and unspeakable acts drug-crazed soldiers committed on old men and women. Since returning, I have urged the President time and again to speak out against this war. I have asked him to offer to help by making available a high level person experienced and wise in diplomacy and negotiation to help both sides search for common ground. To search for a more humane way out. But this administration did nothing. This administration does nothing to advance human rights or to condemn the horrors taking place in Chechnya.

Here are copies of my exchanges of ideas with the President; with the administration. I insert these in the RECORD at this time.

My point in standing here is to advance the notion that America stands for something important. Like it or not we are the sole nation of sufficient stature, strength, and compassion which can, in the world court of public opinion, speak on the side of those with no voice. If we do not, they will not be heard. More will die and suffering will intensify.

But we remain silent. Mr. Speaker, we call on the President to condemn Russian brutality in Chechnya. Condemn those who ignore the basic human rights of others. And urge Vice President GORE to carry this important word to his Russian counterparts during his visit there next week.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, July 10, 1996.

Hon. ALBERT GORE, Jr.,
The Vice President, The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. VICE PRESIDENT: As you prepare for your meeting with Viktor Chernomyrdin this weekend in Moscow, I wanted to share with you the correspondence between the administration and myself on the brutal war in Chechnya. I also have enclosed an op-ed by Georgie Anne Geyer from the Washington Times with which I strongly agree.

It is time for the administration to publicly denounce the fighting in Chechnya and find a fair, honest mediator to help work out the differences between the two sides. The Russian people, the Chechens and, indeed, the world is waiting for a public statement of condemnation from the United States. While I believe it is way overdue, you now have the opportunity, at this, your first post-election meeting with your Russian counterpart, to make such a statement.

Mr. Vice President, this is your opportunity to publicly stand for human rights